



Empowerment Academy – Nashville

BRIEF STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF APPEAL

Dear Members of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission:

The Governing Board of Empowerment Academy respectfully appeals to the Metro Nashville Public Schools Board of Education’s denial of its amended charter application. We request that the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission independently review the amended application and supporting materials and determine that Empowerment Academy has established the educational vision, organizational capacity, financial readiness, and governance necessary to open and sustain a high-quality public charter school serving Davidson County students and families.

I. Empowerment Academy Embraced the Amendment Process

When Metro Nashville identified areas requiring further development, Empowerment Academy accepted that challenge. The governing board carefully reviewed the feedback and strengthened the school’s educational program, leadership structure, staffing model, financial planning, enrollment projections, operational systems, and governance practices.

The review team’s evaluation confirms the significance of those revisions. Every major section improved from **“Does Not Meet Standard”** to **“Partially Meets Standard,”** including Educational Program Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Budget and Finance. These improved ratings reflect a governing board committed to accountability, continuous improvement, and responsive leadership.

II. The Commission's Independent Review

Tennessee's charter amendment process exists to encourage applicants to strengthen their proposals after receiving meaningful feedback. Empowerment Academy accepted that responsibility, invested significant additional time and private resources, and submitted a substantially stronger application for review.

The Board's denial letter explains that its decision was based not only upon the Charter School Review Team's findings, but also upon the district's Estimated Fiscal Impact Summary, concluding that approval would have a substantial negative fiscal impact on Metro Nashville Public Schools. Public statements following the Board's vote emphasized the district's financial realities as a significant factor in its decision.

Respectfully, **this presents the central question before the Commission.** If the amended application successfully addressed significant portions of the review team's concerns, yet the ultimate decision rested upon fiscal considerations beyond the quality of those revisions, the Commission should determine whether the revised application itself received the full and meaningful consideration contemplated by Tennessee's charter authorization process.

That independent review serves an important purpose within Tennessee's charter authorization process by ensuring amended applications receive meaningful consideration after substantial revisions have been made. Empowerment Academy respectfully submits that this revised application warrants that review.

III. Organizational Readiness

The amended application and supplemental exhibits demonstrate a strengthened leadership structure, refined governance, comprehensive staffing plan, operational readiness, and a clear implementation strategy developed in direct response to reviewer feedback.

Equally important, Empowerment Academy has demonstrated its commitment through action. Board members and community partners invested more than **\$164,000** in charter development, curriculum planning, legal support, professional consultation, application preparation, and community engagement.

IV. Approval Is in the Best Interests of Davidson County Students and the Community

Although Tennessee and Metro Nashville have made academic gains, substantial unmet need remains. Statewide, only approximately **42% of students were proficient in English language arts and 41% were proficient in mathematics in 2026**, meaning that most Tennessee students still did not meet grade-level expectations in either core subject. In Metro Nashville, the most recently reported complete district results showed only **31.9% of students meeting or exceeding expectations in mathematics**, while approximately two-thirds of students did not meet expectations in mathematics or English language arts.

The need is especially significant for students from historically underserved communities. SCORE's analysis found achievement gaps exceeding **20 percentage points** statewide between Black, Hispanic, and Native American students and their non-BHN peers, and between economically disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. These disparities directly affect the students Empowerment Academy was designed to serve through small learning environments, structured literacy, targeted intervention, leadership development, mentorship, and sustained family engagement.

V. Conclusion

Empowerment Academy asks the Commission to evaluate the amended application on the strength of what it became. The governing board embraced constructive feedback, strengthened every major component of its proposal, invested more than **\$164,000** in preparation, and presented a focused educational model responsive to documented student needs.

For these reasons, Empowerment Academy respectfully requests that the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission reverse the decision of the Metro Nashville Public Schools Board of Education and authorize Empowerment Academy to serve the students and families of Davidson County.

Respectfully submitted,

Natisha Brooks

President, Governing Board
Empowerment Academy